

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Washington State Capitol building. The building is a large, classical structure with a prominent dome and a portico with columns. It is surrounded by lush green trees and manicured hedges. In the foreground, there is a circular garden bed with pink flowers. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. Two street lamps with warm yellow light are visible on either side of the building.

Annual Report

2020



Letter from President Gelder

It has truly been my honor to serve as your WSAC President this year. I have to say that the year did not necessarily unfold as I had anticipated last November. That said, it has been a year of firsts. And a year where I was very glad to have the support and engagement of the other three officers.

Commissioner Scott Hutsell graciously shared his experience and imparted a statesmanship and ease that left us all grounded. Commissioner Michael Largent, your 1st VP and incoming President, brought his accounting acumen during budget development and openly shared his sense of humor. Councilmember Jamie Stephens brought his calm demeanor and critical thinking to the conversations.

While the first quarter or so of my term started out “normally,” it quickly became evident that our “usual” was going to be shattered, and we had to learn on the fly. I could not be prouder of the WSAC staff and Eric Johnson’s leadership. When the 2020 legislative session was barely a memory, the staff pivoted,

mastered virtual platforms, and helped us navigate the ever shifting sands of what is/was the COVID pandemic and CARES funding. While we gained some rhythm to the communications, our counties were buoyed because of each and every one of YOUR efforts. You, as county leaders, are where we truly touch local citizens and respond to their needs in the moments of crisis. For that, I thank you.

As we move into a virtual County Leader’s Conference and ready ourselves for the year to come, I remain committed to the vital role of local county government and the strength we have together in WSAC and NACo.

Thank you for stepping up, for making a difference for your community, and for joining your voice with the voices of your colleagues around the state. Together we are stronger.

Robert Gelder
WSAC President



Table of Contents

4	Who We Are
7	Litigation
10	Member Engagement
11	Communication & Member Services
12	Advocacy
14	Legislative Affairs
16	Federal Relations and Engagement
18	Counties Coastal Caucus
19	Columbia River Caucus
21	Timber
22	Financial Health
24	Contact Us

Who We Are

Created in 1906, the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) serves the counties of Washington State. Members include elected county commissioners, councilmembers, and executives from all of Washington's 39 counties. WSAC provides a variety of services to its member counties, including advocacy, professional development, public-private business partnerships, and a forum to network and share best practices.



While voting within the organization is limited to county commissioners, council members, and county executives, the Association also serves as an umbrella organization for affiliate organizations representing:

- County Road Engineers
- Local Public Health Officials
- County Administrators
- Solid Waste Managers
- County Human Service Administrators
- IT Directors
- Planning Directors
- Clerks of County Boards

WSAC also works closely with its sister organization, the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO), which serves independently elected non-judicial county officials, including assessors, auditors, treasurers, prosecutors, coroners, clerks, and sheriffs.

The Voice of Washington Counties





Letter from Executive Director Eric Johnson

COVID-19 dramatically changed the trajectory of services and the manner in which the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) delivered those services in 2020. It has caused us to evaluate if we are simply adapting operations during the pandemic, or if we are making a fundamental shift and change in the way we do business. Since mid-March, our primary focus in our advocacy and communications divisions has revolved around helping counties respond to and recover from the pandemic. While this is a phenomenal opportunity for WSAC to deliver information and communicate with members, it has also created challenges that continuously remind me of what we tell each newly elected official:

What you **WANT** to work on, accomplish, or focus on is often not what you **GET** to work on, achieve, or focus on. Case in point: COVID-19.

2020 is an election year. Quite frankly, this is a tremendous distraction to administering a cohesive and harmonized

Association. With the results of this election nearly certified, it appears there will be several new county commissioners and councilmembers joining us in 2021. It is incumbent on our current members to lead our efforts and help zero in on the issues important to county government - to focus on the policies, issues, and content essential to counties' operations and governance. Let's be good at politics and not get swept into the ugliness of divisive partisanship.

I am committed to serving you and working with you to help members serve with integrity. Remember to stay focused on executing your responsibilities with civility, thoughtfulness, professionalism, and respectful dialogue with peers and the public who has entrusted you to lead county government in Washington.

Eric Johnson
Executive Director, WSAC



Litigation

The Strategic Litigation, Advocacy, and Communication Program ensures that the use of legal actions is an effective tool to advance the WSAC policy agenda in coordination with legislative advocacy strategies and actions. Our legal actions are used sparingly and as a last resort.

...the court confirmed that ultimately the State bears the duty to provide indigent defense services as required under the U.S. and Washington Constitutions.

Litigation Activities:

Challenged the constitutionality of Senate House Bill 2887 (2018) requiring Spokane County to elect a five member, by district, Board of County Commissioners.

On August 20, 2020, the Washington Supreme Court ruled that:

“SHB 2887 is constitutional under article XI, sections 4 and 5. Under article XI, section 4, SHB 2887 properly sets forth a “uniform system” such that any noncharter county that exceeds 400,000 people in population will be subjected to SHB 2887’s requirements. Further, under article XI, section 5, the legislature may classify counties by population for any purpose that does not violate other constitutional provisions, and SHB 2887 is a general law that properly implements district-only elections for noncharter counties of a certain size.”

Filed a complaint with the superior court to hold Senate Bill 5472 (Ballot Drop Box Bill) is a violation of RCW 43.135.060, Prohibition of new or extended programs without full reimbursement.

On October 14, 2020 Judge Lee ruled that SB 5472, which mandated County Auditors to significantly increase the number of ballot drop boxes statewide at an estimated capital cost of over one million dollars plus yearly operating and maintenance costs, ***“is an unfunded mandate pursuant to RCW 43.135.060.”***

Reviewed and participated in legal action regarding the State’s constitutional duty of the state of Washington regarding trial court indigent defense.

Filed an amicus brief in Davison v. State of Washington and Washington State Office of Public Defense Supreme Court, where the court confirmed that ultimately the State bears the duty to provide indigent defense services as required under the U.S. and Washington Constitutions. While the State has discretion to delegate to local governments responsibility for providing these services, in so doing the State must provide local governments with the authority and means necessary to furnish constitutionally adequate indigent defense.

The Court remanded for consideration of whether the systemic and structural deficiencies in the current state system, as alleged by the plaintiffs and described in WSAC’s amicus brief, violate the State’s constitutional duties

Initiated research and analysis regarding potential and likely claims of the State of Washington’s statutory and constitutional duty to fund trial court indigent defense.



Worked with counsel and county prosecuting attorneys on amicus briefs about issues that include:

- Personnel and Labor
- Public Works Liability
- Labor and Personnel
- Law Enforcement and Public Safety
- Public Health
- Corrections, Jails and Medical Costs
- Land Use and Zoning
- Taxation, Fees and Charges
- Public Records
- Constitutional and Administrative Authorities for County Elected Officials
- Franchise Agreements
- Juror Pay
- Public Health Responsibilities
- Trial Court Indigent Defense
- County Charter

Member Engagement



100%

of counties
are members
of WSAC



100%

of counties were
represented
at the 2019
County Leaders
Conference



27

presidential
leadership
appointments
to NACo
committees,
caucuses, and
task forces



29

**WSAC Member
Meetings**

- 4 Board Meetings
- 16 Legislative Steering Committee Meetings
- 4 Federal Priorities Committee Meetings
- 3 Policy Review Committee Meetings
- 2 Audit Committee Meetings

Communications & Member Services

The Communications and Member Services division is responsible for strategic communications, education, networking, member services, and events.



Twitter

1,888 followers

A 15% increase from 2019



Facebook

2,595 page likes

A 73% increase from 2019

240,000 User Impressions

Facebook post reach



Website

22,000 website visitors



Email

100+ COVID-19 News Emails

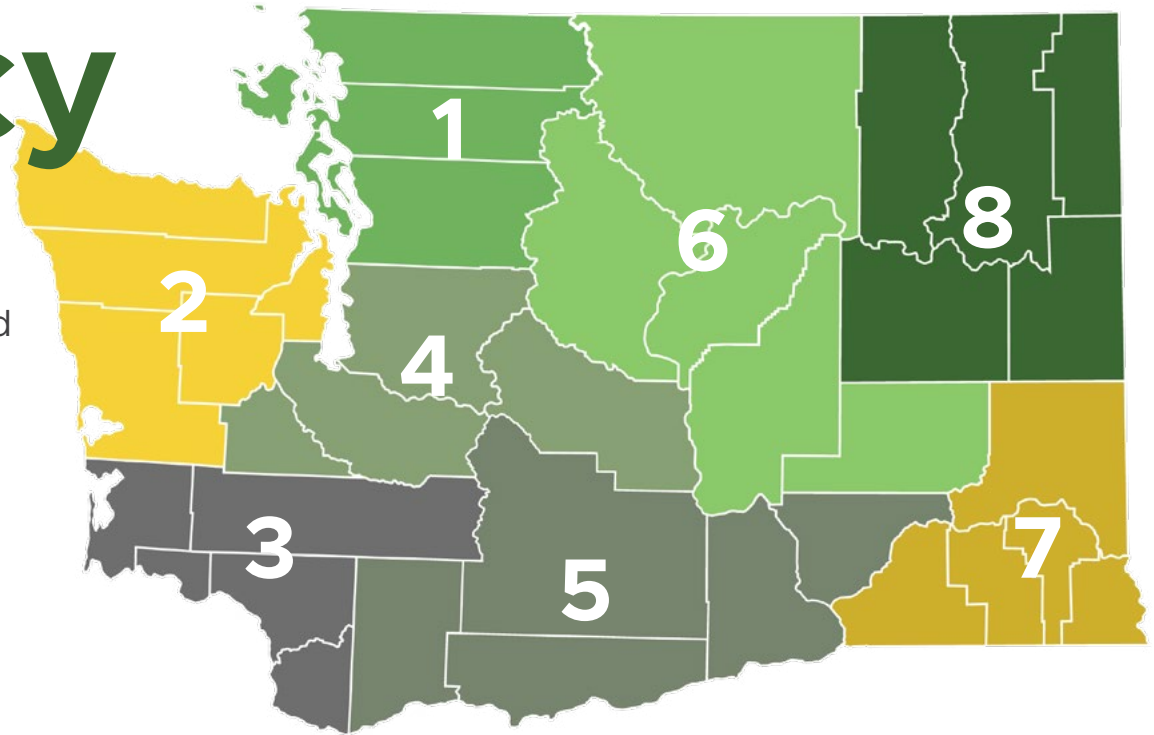
Key Accomplishments

1. Partnered with the Washington Counties Risk Pool to overhaul the Certified Public Official program which included the new curriculum development, re-branding, and investments in new technology.
2. Produced five virtual conferences and processed over 700 registrations.
3. Re-launched our monthly member e-newsletter *The Insider*
4. Launched new COVID-19 resources to increase communication and provide vital resources to members and stakeholders.
5. Increased social media engagement and followers.

Advocacy

8 REGIONAL MEETINGS

In April and May 2020, WSAC hosted 8 regional meetings where each of WSAC's 39 member counties met remotely with public health representatives and legislators from across the state to discuss county efforts and needs in addressing the novel coronavirus.



The regions were

Region 1 – Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom

Region 2 – Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason

Region 3 – Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum

Region 4 – King, Kittitas, Pierce, Thurston

Region 5 – Benton, Franklin, Klickitat, Skamania, Yakima

Region 6 – Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Okanogan

Region 7 – Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, Whitman

Region 8 – Ferry, Lincoln, Spokane, Stevens, Pend Oreille

The regions covered COVID-19 related topics like →

**Impact on County Functions | Essential Needs | Public Safety | Budget and Staff Reductions
Reopening Considerations | County Public Health Response to the Pandemic**



LSC members met in Olympia five times



They met with:

- Governor Jay Inslee
- Speaker of the House Laurie Jenkins
- Chair of House Local Government Committee Representative Gerry Pollet
- Chair of Senate Local Government Committee Dean Takko
- House Transportation Committee Chair Representative Jake Fey
- Senate Transportation Committee Chair Senator Steve Hobbs
- Washington State Department of Ecology Director Laura Watson
- Tom Bugert and Joanna Eide from Washington State Department of Natural Resources (Wildfire)
- Keri Waterland of Health Care Authority
- Thomas Kinlan of Department of Social and Health Services (Trueblood)
- Dr Kathy Lofy of Department of Health (Coronavirus)



During the 2019-2020 biennium, **4,640 bills** were introduced;



868

passed the legislature



59

were vetoed in whole (26) or in part (33) by the governor



60 Day

legislative session



Legislative Affairs

This session brought more than its share of unique challenges, beginning with a new speaker of the house for the first time in twenty years and ending with the arrival of the novel coronavirus and necessary responses.

For the counties, there were some bright spots this session. However, in the last days allowed for bill action, Governor Inslee vetoed a number of bills and budget items in an effort to reduce overall spending in light of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, not all of the gains WSAC made this session made it past the chopping block.

Priority Policy and Funding Advancements Include:

GOAL

State funding for their fair share of election costs

OUTCOME: **ESHB 2421** is a commitment from the State to pay its pro rata share of all elections starting in 2021.

GOAL

Increased funding for Foundational Public Health Services

OUTCOME: The Legislature backfilled a funding promise in the 2019 budget that had not been fully realized and added \$3 million in additional funding for public health infrastructure and capacity.

GOAL

Restoring funding for county solid waste programs.

OUTCOME: While ultimately vetoed by the governor due to the pandemic, WSAC secured a \$7 million increase in funding for the Local Solid Waste Financial Assistance program (LSWFA) - a grant program managed by Ecology that provides revenues to county

programs for implementation of local comprehensive solid waste management plans. This amount represents a 70% increase over previous funding.

GOAL

Additional investments in affordable housing and homelessness

OUTCOME: The State is providing a total of \$160 million in the operating budget for housing and homelessness related programs. In the capital budget, the State provides \$7.8 million for projects that enhance shelter capacity around the state and \$5 million for a new competitive grant program for the development of community housing and cottage communities to shelter individuals or households experiencing homelessness.

GOAL

Secure a coordinated watershed approach to fish barrier removal.


OUTCOME: The final capital budget includes a proviso directing the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board to develop a comprehensive statewide

culvert remediation plan that works in conjunction with the state approach to fully satisfy the fish barrier removal injunction mandate. The comprehensive plan must be consistent with the principles and requirements of the injunction and must achieve coordinated investment strategy goals of permanent injunction compliance. The Fish Barrier Removal board shall work and consult with tribes to develop this watershed approach.

GOAL

Securing funding and assistance for local public health to respond to COVID-19.

OUTCOME: **EHB 2965** provided a total of \$175 million to be directed from the budget stabilization account for public health response and healthcare surge with the remaining \$25 million will be transferred into the newly created COVID-19 unemployment account to help businesses and workers disrupted by the pandemic.



Federal Relations and Engagement

The Washington State Association of Counties participates in federal issue policy development and advocacy while striving to build positive working relationships with federal elected and appointed officials.

Federal Priorities

- Infrastructure
- Catastrophic Wildfires
- Opioid Epidemic
- Payment in Lieu of Taxes
- Secure Rural Schools
- Medicaid Inmate Exclusion

Federal Advocacy Activities

WSAC members collaborated on three coordinated advocacy efforts to meet with members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation:

1

2020

January

President Gelder and
Director Johnson,
Washington D.C

2

2020

March

NACo Legislative
Conference, WSAC
Leadership/Member,
Washington D.C

3

2020

September

Virtual NACo PILT/
SRS Advocacy, Timber
Counties Committee
Members

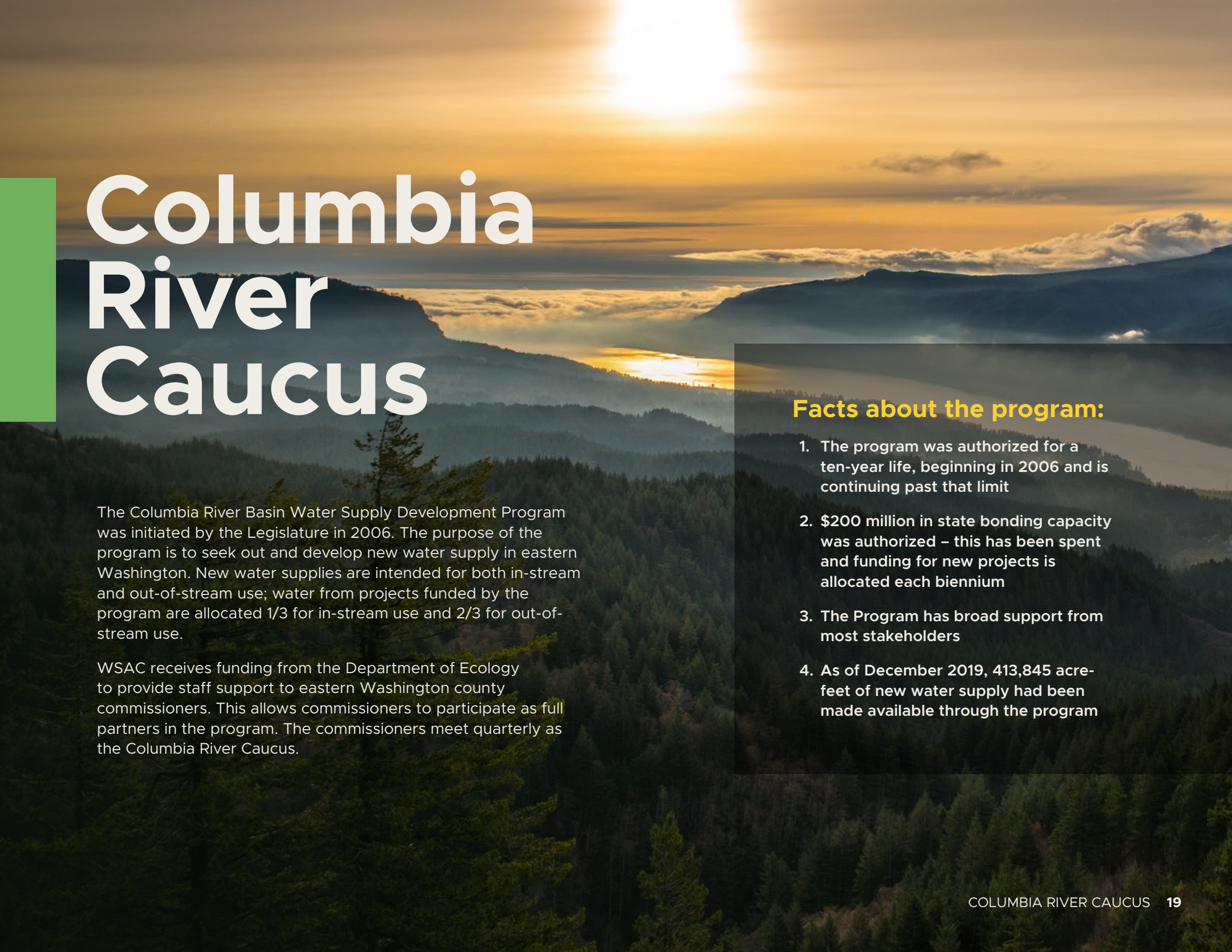
An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top half shows a rocky shore with dark, wet rocks meeting a body of water. The water is a deep teal color. In the middle of the water, a person in a red kayak is visible, moving towards the bottom right. The bottom half of the image shows a dense forest of green trees along the shoreline. A solid green rectangular block is positioned on the left side, partially overlapping the title text.

Counties Coastal Caucus

The Washington State Association of Counties created the Coastal Counties Caucus, comprised of 14 counties bordering Puget Sound, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Pacific Ocean shortly before the creation of the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) in 2007. The Caucus creates a forum for counties to interact, engage, and recommend WSAC positions on issues relating to the waters of Puget Sound, Hood Canal, and the Pacific Ocean. The program also supports members of the Puget Sound Partnership's Ecosystem Coordination Board and Salmon Recovery Council, both of which have county elected official representation. The Caucus works to ensure coastal county interests and priorities are brought forward to the Legislative Steering Committee, state and federal agencies, tribal nations, and other key stakeholders.

Key Accomplishments

1. Monitored and reported on Puget Sound Partnership efforts that involved county policy interests to WSAC policy staff and the Counties Coastal Caucus including the 2022-2026 Action Agenda Update, the Toxics in Fish Implementation Strategy, and continuation of the Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force recommendations (“net ecological gain”).
2. Planned and coordinated the annual meeting at the WSAC Leaders Conference to include peer to peer information sharing and engage with state legislators.
3. Updated the WSAC policy statement for the Puget Sound Partnership to incorporate updated information, objectives, and goals in the state's salmon recovery efforts.



Columbia River Caucus

The Columbia River Basin Water Supply Development Program was initiated by the Legislature in 2006. The purpose of the program is to seek out and develop new water supply in eastern Washington. New water supplies are intended for both in-stream and out-of-stream use; water from projects funded by the program are allocated 1/3 for in-stream use and 2/3 for out-of-stream use.

WSAC receives funding from the Department of Ecology to provide staff support to eastern Washington county commissioners. This allows commissioners to participate as full partners in the program. The commissioners meet quarterly as the Columbia River Caucus.

Facts about the program:

1. The program was authorized for a ten-year life, beginning in 2006 and is continuing past that limit
2. \$200 million in state bonding capacity was authorized – this has been spent and funding for new projects is allocated each biennium
3. The Program has broad support from most stakeholders
4. As of December 2019, 413,845 acre-feet of new water supply had been made available through the program

Columbia River Caucus Continued



Key Accomplishments

1. The Caucus has monitored negotiations between the U.S. and Canada (the Columbia River Treaty), which may affect the provision of additional water supply. We have participated since the start of work on the U.S. side of the border in 2011 by making presentations to the state caucus, testifying during proceedings, and connecting with British Columbia local governments in working on common interests
2. We continue our long-term work to ensure that counties have a voice in Ecology's management of the CR Program. This is accomplished by continuing having four members of the Columbia River Policy Advisory Group, which advised Ecology's Office of Columbia River on administering the Columbia River Program. Counties have been part of the CR-PAG since its creation in 2006.
3. We are continuing to monitor the Environmental Impact Statement process for the Columbia River System Operations Review, a process that started up in late 2016 with a scoping process announcement. During February to June of 2020, draft and final Environmental Impact Statements were issued. During the same time period there were section 7 consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act. A Record of Decision was issued on September 30, 2020.
4. Quarterly meetings of the Commissioners' PAG continue to be held and are key to ensuring a flow of information both to county commissioners and from them to the CR-PAG and the Department of Ecology. We also have regular discussions and meetings with the Director of the Office of Columbia River occur several times a year.





Timber

The timber counties program works diligently to support, advocate for, and represent our member counties with interests in timberland management issues. This includes counties that are beneficiaries of state forestlands and counties with other private, state, and federal forestlands utilized for commercial timber harvest, conservation, recreation, and other purposes.

Key Accomplishments

1. Successfully recruited and retained a new, highly qualified representative for WSAC members on the Timber, Fish & Wildlife Policy Committee and to assist with statewide timber issues.
2. We developed a partnership with the Washington Family Forestry Association to improve WSAC members' representation and engagement with DNR's Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research Committee (CMER).
3. Retained contractor Mason Bruce & Girard, and formed a steering committee to conduct an economic impact study on the Marbled Murrelet Long-Term Conservation Strategy.
4. WSAC secured a meeting for members with USFS Chief Vicki Christiansen.
5. Successfully updated WSAC's policy statement on forest resources with the Timber Counties Caucus.
6. Supported legislation creating the community forest grant program.
7. Retained Mason Bruce & Girard to represent WSAC member on DNR's sustainable harvest technical advisory committee.

Financial Health

Accomplishments

1.

**Completed
2018-2019
Financial
Audit**

2.

**Finalized new
comprehensive
Financial
Policies &
Procedures
Manual**

3.

**Created
a new,
interactive
budget
development
tool**

4.

**Updated
Financial
Statement
formats
and created
Financial
Summary
Dashboard**

5.

**Revised and
improved
financial
processes
for efficiency
and time
savings**

Financial Dashboard

Total Assets: \$1,348,825

Cash: \$651,808

A/R & Prepays: \$485,474

Fixed & Long-Term Assets: \$211,544

Liabilities: \$359,796

Payables: \$287,796

Deferred Rev: \$72,000

Net Assets: \$989,029

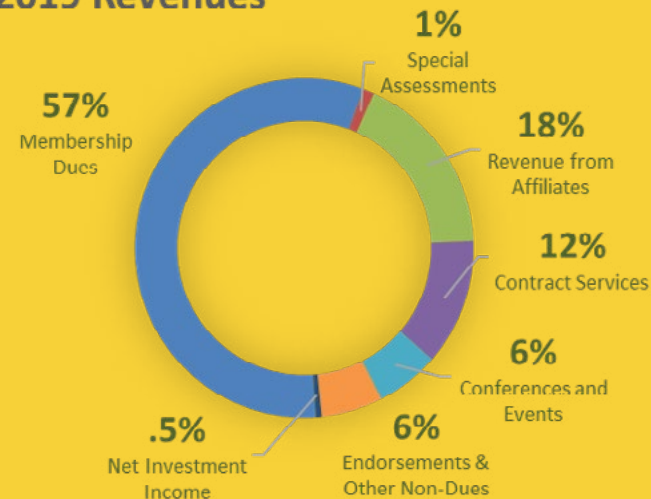
Change from 2018: (\$150,422)

2019

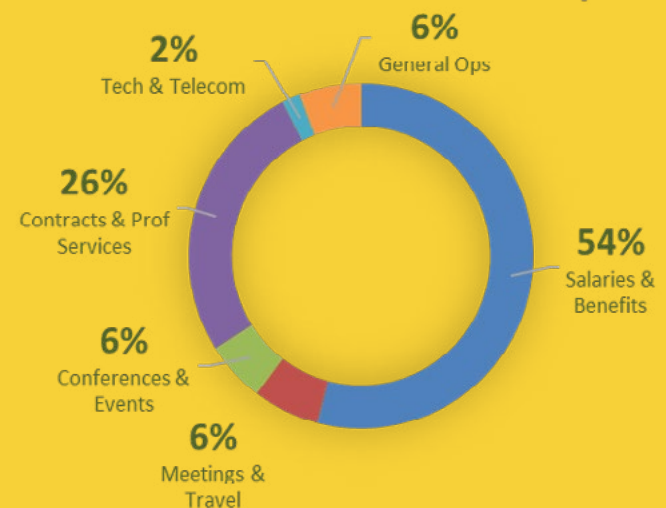
Total Revenue:
\$3,387,033

Total Expenses:
\$3,475,211

2019 Revenues



2019 Expenses



Staff

Administration & Finance



Eric Johnson
Executive Director



Lynn Fiorillo-Lowe
Operations and
Support Assistant



Bridget Lockling
Director, Finance
and Administration

Communications & Member Services



Derek Anderson
Director,
Communications &
Member Services



Melissa Archuleta
Senior Conference
Planner



Jason Bergquist
Affiliate Services
Coordinator



Tyler Melhart
Graphic/Web
Design Manager



Mitch Netzer
Communications
Manager

Policy and Legislative Relations



Mellani McAleenan
Director, Government
Relations & General
Counsel



Jaime Bodden
Managing Director,
Washington State
Association of
Local Public Health
Officials (WSALPHO)



Paul Jewell
Policy Director



Juliana Roe
Policy Director



Jane Wall
Managing Director,
Washington State
Association of
County Engineers
(WSACE)



Mike Hoover
Policy Consultant
Mike Hoover
Public Affairs

Program Services



Brynn Brady
Program Consultant
Coastal Caucus
Ceiba Consulting



Neil Aaland
Program Consultant
Columbia River
Program
Aaland Planning
Services



Court Stanley
Program Consultant
Timber Program
Heartwood
Consulting LLC

Executive Committee

2019-2020



President
Robert Gelder
Kitsap County



First Vice President
Michael Largent
Whitman County



Second Vice President
Jamie Stephens
San Juan County



Immediate Past President
Scott Hutsell
Lincoln County

Board Members

James Beaver, Benton County
Jerome Delvin, Benton County
Doug England, Chelan County
Mark Ozias, Clallam County
John Blom, Clark County
Eileen Quiring O'Brien, Clark County
Dennis Weber, Cowlitz County
Brad Peck, Franklin County
Helen Price Johnson, Island County
Janet St. Clair, Island County
Dow Constantine, King County
Reagan Dunn, King County

Kathy Lambert, King County
Joe McDermott, King County
Charlotte Garrido, Kitsap County
Ed Wolfe, Kitsap County
Cory Wright, Kittitas County
Dave Sauter, Klickitat County
Edna Fund, Lewis County
Chris Branch, Okanogan County
Karen Skoog, Pend Oreille County
Doug Richardson, Pierce County
Jim McCune, Pierce County
Kenneth Dahlstedt, Skagit County

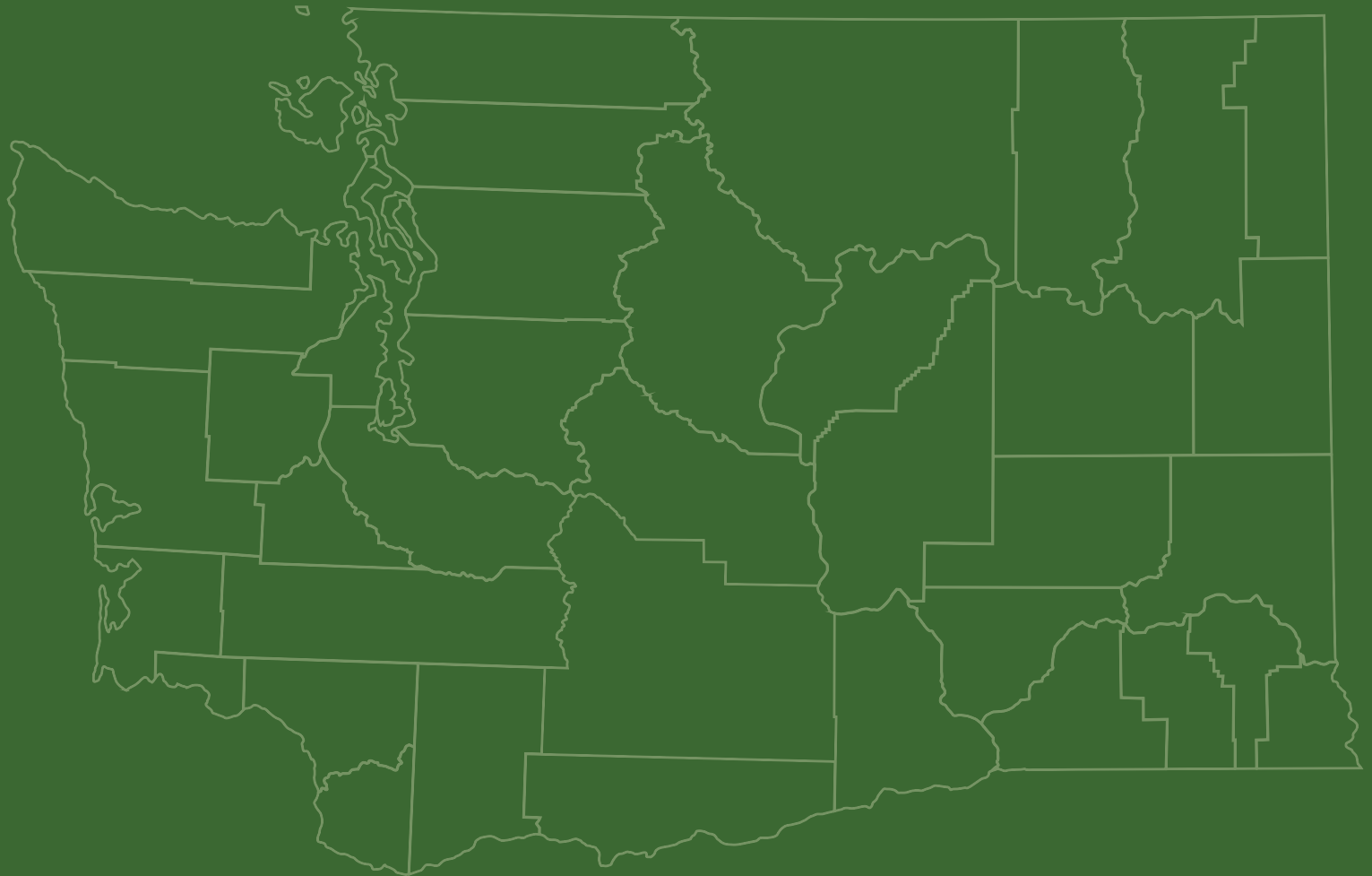
Nate Nehring, Snohomish County
Stephanie Wright, Snohomish County
Al French, Spokane County
Mary Kuney, Spokane County
Gary Edwards, Thurston County
John Hutchings, Thurston County
Rud Browne, Whatcom County
Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County
Ron Anderson, Yakima County
Vicki Baker, Yakima County

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WASHINGTON
STATE ASSOCIATION
of **COUNTIES**